

Reineer, brother and sister Steve and Jodi, her husband Paul, and two sons Nick and Hunter.

Mr. Speaker, I am here today to join the loved ones of Lori A. Nimmerfroth in the mourning of her loss. She positively contributed to the betterment of her community, state, and nation. I would like to express my deepest condolences to her friends and family, and offer the recognition of this Body of Congress to the many impacts, both small and large that Lori made. While we will all miss her tremendously, all who knew her will be incalculably better off because she played a role in their lives.

INTRODUCTION OF THE CAPTIVE WILDLIFE SAFETY ACT

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 25, 2002

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce legislation that represents a firm commitment to protect the safety of the American public and to protect the welfare of wild animals that are increasingly being maintained as pets. This legislation identifies and provides a solution to a growing national problem that must be addressed.

The bill, the Captive Wildlife Safety Act, would amend the Lacey Act and bar the interstate and foreign commerce of dangerous exotics, including lions, tigers, leopards, cheetahs, cougars, and bears, for use as pets. The legislation would not ban all private ownership of these prohibited species; rather, it would outlaw the commerce of these animals for use as pets.

The legislation specifically exempts zoos, circuses, and others that are currently regulated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture under the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act. Instead, the bill is specifically aimed at the unregulated and untrained individuals who are maintaining these wild animals as exotic pets.

According to best estimates, there are more than 5,000 tigers in captivity in the United States. There are perhaps more tigers in captivity than there are tigers in their native habitats throughout the range in Asia. While some tigers are held in zoological institutions, most of the animals are pets, kept in cages behind someone's home in a state that does not restrict private ownership of dangerous animals. And it's not just tigers: there is widespread private ownership of other dangerous animals, including lions, cougars, and bears. At a time when almost anything can be bought on the Internet, it is unsurprising that the animals can all be purchased through the more than 1,000 web sites that promote private ownership of wild animals.

Problems arise because most owners are ignorant of a wild animal's needs, and local veterinarians, sanctuaries, animal shelters, and local governments are ill equipped to meet the challenge of providing proper care. Wild animals, especially such large and uniquely powerful animals as lions and tigers, should be kept in captivity by professional zoological facilities. Only curators of these facilities have the knowledge and know-how to

meet the animals behavioral, physical, and nutritional needs.

People living near these animals are also in real danger. There is a laundry list of incidents of dangerous exotics seriously injuring and killing people. In Loxahatchee, Florida, in February, a 58-year-old woman was bitten in the head by a 750-pound pet Siberian-Bengal tiger mix. In Lexington, Texas, in October last year, a three-year-old boy was killed by his stepfather's pet tiger. Earlier that year in August, a pet lion bit a woman trying to feed peaches to some captive bears.

The Captive Wildlife Safety Act represents an emerging consensus on the need for comprehensive federal legislation to regulate what animals can be kept as pets.

A wide range of groups and institutions, for example, oppose the private ownership of carnivores. The U.S. Department of Agriculture states, "Large wild and exotic cats such as lions, tigers, cougars and leopards are dangerous animals."*** Because of these animals' potential to kill or severely injure both people and other animals, an untrained person should not keep them as pets. Doing so poses serious risks to family, friends, neighbors, and the general public. Even an animal that can be friendly and love can be very dangerous."

The American Veterinary Medical Association also "strongly opposes the keeping of wild carnivore species of animals as pets and believes that all commercial traffic of these animals for such purpose should be prohibited."

This bill is just one part of the solution to help protect people and exotic animals. States will continue to play a major role. I hope to see the grassroots effort directed at the state and local government level, to increase the number of states and counties that ban private ownership of dangerous exotic animals. Already, 12 states ban private possession of large exotic animals, while 7 states have partial bans.

The Captive Wildlife Safety Act is supported by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, The Humane Society of the United States, The Fund for Animals, and the International Fund for Animal Welfare. I also want to thank the actress Tippi Hedron for raising awareness of this issue on Capitol Hill. Tippi operates an animal sanctuary, and often has the sad and expensive task of rescuing these animals after their owners realize the lion or tiger is a safety risk and cannot be properly cared for.

I ask my colleagues to cosponsor this legislation, and I hope that the Resources Committee, on which I serve, will take up the legislation in an expeditious manner.

ALIEN CHILD ORGAN TRANSPLANT ACT OF 2002

HON. LUIS V. GUTIERREZ

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 25, 2002

Mr. GUTIERREZ. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to announce the introduction of the "Alien Child Organ Transplant Act of 2002", a bill that would provide coverage under the Medicaid program for organ transplant procedures. Under my bill, children under 18 years of age who are currently residing in this country and develop a medical condition that requires an organ transplant would be able to receive Medicaid coverage for the procedure.

Many of my colleagues may not be aware of this, but current law does not allow legal permanent residents to receive Medicare coverage for a life-saving measure such as an organ transplant. And I am referring to legal permanent residents, that is, immigrants who are here legally.

Melannie Veliz is such an immigrant. Melannie has cystic fibrosis and the disease has left her with only marginal lung function. She is very ill and her lung capacity is about one-third of what it should be. In her delicate state, she is susceptible to bronchitis and infections. This means she has trouble, sometimes, playing. Sometimes, she can't go to school or be with her friends. She can rarely do the things that every child deserves. No matter where he or she was born.

Melannie, is an 11-year old student at Smith School in Aurora, Illinois. She lives with her parents, Christian and Johanna, and her younger brother. Melannie, who was born in Chile, traveled here with her family on visas, as required by the law. Unlike most immigrants who come to America seeking a better life, the Veliz family came to America not simply seeking a better life—but life. Life for Melannie.

The Veliz family came here looking for life-saving procedures that were not available in Chile. Unfortunately, although their entry into this country was completely within the law—the laws of this nation have kept Melannie from becoming healthy. I am referring to the current punitive laws and harsh rules which prohibit people, including children, from accessing key public services, including Medicaid, due simply to their immigration status.

Melannie's health can be improved and her life could be saved through a double lung transplant. The procedure is risky but can be done. Her dream of a better life is not being blocked by medical technology. No. Melannie's immediate dream was denied because she is not able to participate in the Medicaid program.

However, thanks to the initial enterprising spirit of Melannie's teacher, Maria López, her supporters were able to obtain significant donations to secure the operation. The goal at the time was \$309,000. This was before the hospital decided that the original estimates were inaccurate and that at least \$450,000 would be needed to ensure that Melannie would receive the necessary aftercare. But the human spirit never gives up. And nobody gave up in the quest to secure the needed funds. Fundraising efforts were so successful, thanks in no small measure to the direct involvement of the Cacique Foundation, that Melannie and her supporters have now secured more than the \$450,000 needed for the operation.

As a Member of Congress, I pledge to continue my fight in defense of the rights of immigrants specially those who, like Melannie, are very young and most vulnerable. I will continue to compel my colleagues to recognize that the harsh penalties that they impose on people because of their immigrant status can—and must—be overturned.

Not simply for the health of those kids who are affected by these laws, but for the health of our nation, so that we can truly live up to the standard of decency that we so often attribute to America.

Melannie has been fortunate enough to benefit from generous donors, but she has been a victim of the not-so-generous laws. She has